



June 25, 2019

Iowa Council on Human Services

Identifying and implementing strategies to optimize the care and services children on Medicaid receive

The [Child and Family Policy Center](#) (CFPC) is a multi-issue child advocacy organization, working to better link research and policy on issues vital to children and families, while advocating for evidence-based practices that improve child and family outcomes. Child health and well-being is a primary focus of CFPC. Through our work to promote child health and well-being, CFPC recognizes Medicaid as a critical source of health insurance for kids—covering nearly 2 in 5 kids in Iowa. This means we have a tremendous opportunity to move the needle on improving health outcomes for Iowa’s children by bettering Medicaid’s ability to deliver care.

With Medicaid representing a significant portion of the budget that the Council oversees, we take this opportunity to recommend a pair of strategies for optimizing the care and services children on Medicaid receive.

- **Create a Pediatric Advisory Board to advise Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) and the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to make recommendations on strategies to improve health outcomes for children covered by Medicaid.**
 - Children make up over half of Iowa’s traditional Medicaid population.¹ Despite children representing the largest population group within Medicaid, there has not been sufficient attention dedicated to their unique health needs.
 - As a result, Iowa is falling well below the national average on several child health outcomes. For example, in 2017 only 37 percent of children in Medicaid were up-to-date on immunizations by age 2, compared with a national median of 68 percent.²
 - We can do better. The Pediatric Advisory Board would bring expertise and dedicated focus to children’s unique health needs. The Pediatric Advisory Board would develop a framework for improving child health outcomes — borrowing from best practices in other states and leveraging the expertise of local pediatric providers, child health advocates, and other key stakeholders in Iowa.
 - The Advisory Board would help improve key pediatric performance targets and help ensure that children on Medicaid are accessing the necessary services to grow up to be healthy adults.
 - The Advisory Board will submit an annual report to the legislature, summarizing their recommendations.

¹ Iowa Department of Human Services. “Budget Reports and Program Narratives: Medical Assistance and Medical Assistance Financial,” accessed at

https://dhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/3_Improve_Iowans_Health_Status_3.pdf

² 2017 Child Core Measure: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/quality-of-care/downloads/performance-measurement/2018-child-chart-pack.pdf>

- **Extend Early, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) to children covered in Iowa's separate CHIP program (hawk-i).**
 - EPSDT is Iowa's Medicaid benefit package for children. Federal law requires Medicaid to cover comprehensive health care for children and youth under 21 through its EPSDT benefit.
 - Although federal law requires all states to provide the EPSDT benefit to children covered by Medicaid, states can decide whether or not to cover EPSDT for children in separate Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP).
 - Iowa does not provide EPSDT to children in our separate CHIP program (hawk-i).
 - Providers shouldn't have to look at a child's health insurance card before deciding whether or not to offer a medically necessary assessment or treatment. Recognizing that EPSDT is uniquely designed to meet the full scope of children's health needs, other states — Wisconsin, Illinois, and Kansas — have extended EPSDT benefits to children in their separate CHIP programs. Iowa should follow the lead of our neighboring states.
 - EPSDT should be the standard of care for all children.

We all want Iowa to be the healthiest state in the nation. In order to achieve this goal, we need to set children on a path to grow up to be healthy, productive adults. These strategies represent two things Iowa can do to help Iowa become the healthiest state in the nation.

Thank you for your support and attention to these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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